



## The Family Rights Coalition of Michigan

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December 6, 2006

Dear Chairman Stahl & Fellow Committee Members,

It has taken two long and arduous years to bring HB 5267 and the concept of two parents having a presumption of equal stature and responsibility in the lives of their children to your committee for consideration. As one of Michigan's leaders in this process, I regret that a sudden medical problem does not allow me to attend this hearing nor submit more substantive testimony.

Here in the balance are the most fundamental American values, enshrined in Thomas Jefferson's articulation of natural law, that we are endowed with "unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Certainly, the love and relationships between a child, mother and father should deserve the highest standard of protection offered by natural and constitutional law.

This love is the foundation upon which a successful society is built. It is the glue which joins members of a family to each other. Family provides the cell structure for neighborhoods, communities and nations. Pope John Paul II has said, "As the family goes, so goes the nation and so goes the whole world in which we live."

We live in a time of great cultural upheaval, a time when all relationships are under siege including those that govern every human interaction in our society from family and community to business and government. The more our social structures disrespect the fundamental relationships of life and family, the weaker are the bonds that hold us together as individual communities and as a state and as a nation.

It is tragic enough that two parents who have joined to conceive a child find that they are unable to maintain a loving and working relationship. Natural law would argue here that the best interest of a child is served when his/her relationship to each of his/her fit parents is protected even though Mom and Dad opt to parent apart. It is oxymoronic to argue that an impersonal, overburdened court system can decide the best interest of a child when that child has two fit parents who love him as no court ever could.

The State creates a far greater tragedy for children, parents and for all of society when it compounds the endemic, conflicts of men and women in families with laws and policies that disenfranchise parents and children merely to assert and insert the authority of the state. The state does not have the resources to evaluate the vast complexities and details of the lives of its 2.5 million children to make decisions about their best interests that are obviously best made by their parents.

HB 5267 would place decision making about the best interests of a child back where it belongs, with their mothers and fathers. It would reserve a role for courts to intervene in only those exceptional circumstances where parents are not able to serve as parents. This proper shift of authority and resources back to the family from the state will restore the vital human capital Michigan needs to revitalize our institutions and our economy.

Central control of family life through the court system is destroying millions of adults and children in our state. HB 5267 will begin the process of reversing this madness.

Respectfully,

Michael T. Ross, MD  
Father of Three Children  
Emergency Physician  
President, Family Rights Coalition